DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 167 971 CS 004 698

TITLE Standards of Excellence for Reading Programs in Virginia.
INSTITUTION Virginia State Dept. of Education, Richmond. Div. of Elementary Education.
PUB DATE Aug 76
NOTE 36p.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Community Involvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Criteria; Program Development; *Program Evaluation; Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; Staff Role; *Standards
IDENTIFIERS *Right to Read; *Virginia

ABSTRACT

Prepared as part of a comprehensive study of reading in Virginia, this booklet contains standards identified by educators that must be exhibited by reading programs in order for them to be classified as "excellent." The ten standards are organized around four components: the learner and learning environment, organizing and managing a reading program, staffing a reading program, and school and community commitment. The standards are also related to one of four principles concerning reading programs. Each standard is accompanied by a list of criteria for evaluation and a five-point rating scale. (FL)

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CS804 698

ED167971

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Standards of Excellence for Reading Programs in Virginia

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Foreword

Standards of excellence for reading programs in Virginia have been developed primarily for use by teachers and administrators. Members of boards of education, laypersons, and other individuals may also find the material useful in examining reading programs.

The standards are designed to foster the maximum development of reading skills for children and adults. They reflect the input of national, state and local professionals, and laypersons.

It is envisioned that Standards of Excellence for Reading Programs in Virginia will assist state and local agencies in working cooperatively toward the National Right To Read goal of literacy for all.

Bernard R. Taylor, Director
Division of Elementary Education
Director, Virginia Right To Read

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Introduction

As a Right To Read State, Virginia has accepted the challenge of working toward the eradication of illiteracy by 1980. As part of this national effort, educators in each state are identifying standards that reading programs should exhibit to be classified as "excellent." Virginia's plan of action for the 70's delineates the commitment to develop, publish, and disseminate standards of excellence in reading. The standards will be used as a guide in planning and organizing training activities and as a measurement instrument in evaluating programs.

A standard is a goal of education that may be expressed as an ideal of excellence. Standards of Excellence in Reading are statements of ideal conditions or elements that are essential to successful programs. They are hallmarks for determining excellence in reading programs.

Standards are needed to establish the scope and purpose of the reading effort. Such standards can unify efforts of state agencies, school divisions, individual schools, and other agencies in developing comprehensive and balanced reading programs.

The Virginia Standards of Excellence are organized around the following four components, which have been identified as essential for effective reading programs:

I. The Learner and Learning Environment
II. Organizing and Managing a Reading Program
III. Staffing a Reading Program
IV. School and Community Commitment

Four principles, or fundamental beliefs, about reading programs have been developed. Each of the 10 Standards of Excellence is related to one of the four principles. Each standard is accompanied by a list of criteria for evaluation and a five point rating scale.

The criteria for evaluation indicate some conditions that should exist if goals of a successful reading program are to be achieved. The rating scale (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) may be used to record the degree to which each criterion for excellence is being achieved.

On the rating scale, 5 represents the maximum degree of excellence and 1 the minimum degree. For example, a criterion might read as follows: "Members of the community contribute to and support the reading program." (1 2 3 4 5) A response of 4 would indicate that community support is evident to a significant degree, and a response of 2 would indicate that community support is evident to a limited degree. A cumulative average of responses in each category can indicate the extent to which program activities in reading are in harmony with program standards or goals.

The Standards of Excellence with their accompanying criteria can serve many purposes and may be used:

—In evaluating current reading programs;
—In suggesting components which can be used to strengthen reading programs;
—In communicating information about a reading program to the profession and to the public;
—As a guide in identifying reading programs that reflect the use of exemplary processes, methods, and procedures;
—As a guide for study and discussion on the state, local division, school, and community levels in developing the concept of a comprehensive reading program which is responsive to the needs of the population.

The principles, standards and criteria for excellence in reading are intended for use by professionals, but may be used by lay persons as well. It is anticipated that through the use of these standards continued improvement in reading will be possible for children and adults.

Effective use of these standards should prove valuable as Virginia moves toward the Right To Read goal of "Excellence in Reading" and "Literacy for All."

PRINCIPLES	STANDARDS
I. THE LEARNER AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	
A. The learning environment which nurtures a positive self-concept enhances the opportunity to learn to read.	1. MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNER, AS A PERSON AND AS A READER, IS RECOGNIZED AS A MAJOR PROGRAM GOAL. 2. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT CREATED BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL FOSTERS POSITIVE INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ENHANCES THE SELF-ESTEEM OF THE LEARNER.
II. ORGANIZING AND MANAGING A READING PROGRAM	
B. Reading skills are developed through planned, systematic, sequential instruction that meet learner needs at all maturity levels.	3. A POINT OF VIEW AND SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES DEVELOPED BY THE SCHOOL STAFF FORM THE BASIS FOR PLANNING THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM. 4. EVALUATION PROCEDURES PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL DIVISION ARE USED TO AID THE TEACHER IN ASSESSING THE READING NEEDS AND STRENGTHS OF THE LEARNERS. 5. INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES AND PROCEDURES UTILIZED BY THE TEACHER ARE THOSE THAT DEVELOP READING COMPETENCIES AND FOSTER LIFELONG READING HABITS. 6. MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT SELECTED BY THE TEACHER ARE UTILIZED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A GROUP.
III. STAFFING A READING PROGRAM	
C. Staffing is a key factor in the success of a reading program.	7. THE TEACHER DEMONSTRATES PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE IN THE TEACHING OF READING AND PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT TO MEETING EACH LEARNER'S NEEDS. 8. THE ADMINISTRATOR REGARDS READING AS AN INTRINSIC PART OF THE TOTAL CURRICULUM AND SUPPORTS THE TEACHING STAFF IN PLANNING ACTIVITIES, OBJECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF THE READING PROGRAM. 9. ALL AUXILIARY PERSONNEL WHO CONTRIBUTE TO PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, OR EVALUATING THE READING PROGRAM ENHANCE THE ESTABLISHED GOALS OF THE PROGRAM.
IV. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COMMITMENT	
D. The cooperative commitment of all educational personnel and members of the community is necessary if the goal of literacy for all is to be achieved.	10. EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL AT ALL LEVELS PLAN AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING THE READING PROGRAM AND FOR ENLISTING COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE READING PROGRAM.

I. THE LEARNER AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

PRINCIPLE A

The learning environment which nurtures a positive self-concept enhances the opportunity to learn to read.

LEARNER AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

STANDARD 1

The maximum development of the learner, as a person and as a reader, is recognized as a major program goal.

STANDARD 2

The learning environment created by school personnel fosters positive interpersonal relationships and enhances the self-esteem of the learner.

LEARNER AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
The learning environment reflects awareness that:	
a. Learning and behavior are caused by external as well as internal factors;	1 2 3 4 5
b. Reading is a learned behavior that can be taught;	1 2 3 4 5
c. Motivation is necessary for learning;	1 2 3 4 5
d. Motivation to learn and learner self-concept are interwoven;	1 2 3 4 5
e. The learner who is positively motivated tends to have a positive self-concept and learns with ease;	1 2 3 4 5
f. A positive view of self can be taught;	1 2 3 4 5
g. The teacher contributes to the development of self-concept not only by what is said, but by what is done, and how;	1 2 3 4 5
h. The teacher influences the effectiveness of the total learning situation;	1 2 3 4 5
i. The physical environment can stimulate positive interpersonal relations.	1 2 3 4 5
In guiding the reading program, the teacher:	
j. Seeks to create an environment in which learners develop constructive attitudes toward one another and learn from each other;	1 2 3 4 5
k. Provides frequent opportunities for success;	1 2 3 4 5
l. Commends the positive contributions that all learners make to the class;	1 2 3 4 5
m. Focuses on strengths and positive attributes of the learners;	1 2 3 4 5
n. Provides opportunities for each learner to function as a contributing member of the class;	1 2 3 4 5
o. Develops strategies for teaching responsibility and self-discipline;	1 2 3 4 5
p. Creates a physical environment which is conducive to learning;	1 2 3 4 5
q. Is sensitive to the physical, social, and emotional needs of all learners;	1 2 3 4 5
r. Communicates to parents and to the community ways of enhancing the self-concept of the learner.	1 2 3 4 5

II. ORGANIZING AND MANAGING A READING PROGRAM

PRINCIPLE B

Reading skills are developed through planned, systematic, sequential instruction that meet learner needs at all maturity levels.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

STANDARD 3

A point of view and supporting objectives developed by the school staff form the basis for planning the instructional program.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
The school staff cooperatively plan a reading program that:	
a. Reflects awareness of learning to read as a developmental process extending over a period of years;	1 2 3 4 5
b. Includes long-range goals which are consistent with the philosophy of the program;	1 2 3 4 5
c. Incorporates attainable objectives leading to long-range goals;	1 2 3 4 5
d. Is coordinated by an individual who is responsible for all reading programs regardless of funding sources and grade levels;	1 2 3 4 5
e. Is sufficiently comprehensive to meet the needs of all learners;	1 2 3 4 5
f. Provides for continuous progress in reading from kindergarten through Grade 12;	1 2 3 4 5
g. Extends the concept of readiness to all levels of learning;	1 2 3 4 5
h. Coordinates reading activities with stages of development;	1 2 3 4 5
i. Is balanced and gives appropriate emphasis to all aspects of reading;	1 2 3 4 5
j. Provides for the introduction, integration, and maintenance of reading skills;	1 2 3 4 5
k. Provides for basic skill instruction and for directed application to reading in the content fields;	1 2 3 4 5
l. Relates reading to all areas of the language arts;	1 2 3 4 5
m. Provides for frequent evaluation of program outcomes and for revisions designed to eliminate weaknesses;	1 2 3 4 5
n. Facilitates continuity through progressive record-keeping;	1 2 3 4 5
o. Involves the library or media center as an integral part of the reading program;	1 2 3 4 5
p. Evidences community participation.	1 2 3 4 5

ASSESSMENT

STANDARD 4

Evaluation procedures provided by the school division are used to aid the teacher in assessing the reading needs and strengths of the learners.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	**Degree of Excellence**
The assessment component of the reading program makes provision for the following:	
a. Norm-referenced measures that are used and interpreted according to the purposes for which they are designed;	1 2 3 4 5
b. A system of measures designed to determine mastery of sequential skills;	1 2 3 4 5
c. A variety of assessment strategies as an on-going part of instruction;	1 2 3 4 5
d. A continuous evaluation program through which the learner is made aware of strengths or weaknesses;	1 2 3 4 5
e. Procedures for evaluating the total reading program in terms of specific goals;	1 2 3 4 5
f. Continuous, systematic self-evaluation procedures by the teacher;	1 2 3 4 5
g. A reporting system to make assessment information available on an individual basis to learners, parents, and/or guardians where applicable.	1 2 3 4 5

ORGANIZING AND MANAGING A READING PROGRAM

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES AND PROCEDURES

STANDARD 5

Instructional approaches and procedures utilized by the teacher are those that develop reading competencies and foster lifelong reading habits.

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES AND PROCEDURES

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
The instructional program reflects sound principles of instruction and therefore:	
a. The teacher is the professional individual who is responsible for developing reading experiences and activities;	1 2 3 4 5
b. The learner is involved in setting realistic goals, and in planning and evaluating progress;	1 2 3 4 5
c. Teacher guidance is both structured to give purpose and flexible to encourage the emergence of personal strengths, preferences, and discoveries;	1 2 3 4 5
d. Emphasizes prevention of reading problems through early detection and correction of reading deficiencies;	1 2 3 4 5
Instructional approaches and procedures are utilized that:	
e. Reach all learners, however different;	1 2 3 4 5
f. Involve diagnosis as an ongoing part of instruction;	1 2 3 4 5
g. Adjust instruction and materials to individual needs on the basis of adequate diagnosis;	1 2 3 4 5
h. Determine the readiness of the learner, in terms of maturity and skill, to handle the learning tasks;	1 2 3 4 5
i. Provide guidance and assistance to the learner in initiating and completing required tasks;	1 2 3 4 5
j. Guide learners in applying information and ideas that they acquire;	1 2 3 4 5
k. Ensure the development of sequential skills needed to discover language relationships, identify words, unlock meanings, and extend concepts;	1 2 3 4 5
l. Aid the learner in the transition from reading simple stories to reading factual material;	1 2 3 4 5
m. Promote independent reading by providing sufficient guidance in how to read materials at each successive learning level and in each content area;	1 2 3 4 5
n. Provide instruction in library skills and study skills.	1 2 3 4 5

ORGANIZING AND MANAGING A READING PROGRAM

SELECTING AND UTILIZING MATERIALS

STANDARD 6

Materials and equipment selected by the teacher are utilized to meet the needs of learners individually and as a group.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
The teacher selects a variety of materials and equipment to ensure that:	
a. Materials of many levels of difficulty are available to accommodate the interests and experiences of the learners;	1 2 3 4 5
b. The reading series used reflects a sound philosophy of instruction, and provides structure and stability throughout the skills sequence;	1 2 3 4 5
c. The basal reader is used as a tool for teaching reading skills, but not as the complete reading program;	1 2 3 4 5
d. Motivational and supplementary materials are used which are in line with and reinforce the reading objectives of the program;	1 2 3 4 5
e. Materials and equipment are made available to the learners which promote the achievement of reading objectives;	1 2 3 4 5
f. Opportunities are provided for each learner to use an ever-increasing variety of resources;	1 2 3 4 5
g. Learners become familiar with the use of the library or media center.	1 2 3 4 5

III. STAFFING A READING PROGRAM

PRINCIPLE C

Staffing is a key factor in the success of a reading program.

THE TEACHER

STANDARD 7

The teacher demonstrates professional competence in the teaching of reading and professional commitment to meeting each learner's needs.

THE TEACHER

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
The teacher in an excellent reading program:	
a. Meets the certification requirements of the Board of Education for the assigned position;	1 2 3 4 5
b. Demonstrates the levels of knowledge and skill necessary for success in teaching reading;	1 2 3 4 5
c. Grows professionally through participation in continuing educational activities such as: inservice programs, attendance at conferences, professional reading, viewing demonstrations, intervisitations, graduate and post-graduate studies;	1 2 3 4 5
d. Respects and attempts to know and understand all learners;	1 2 3 4 5
e. Is receptive to professional assistance;	1 2 3 4 5
f. Evidences flexibility in professional judgement and action;	1 2 3 4 5
g. Uses community resources to enrich teaching-learning experiences.	1 2 3 4 5

STAFFING A READING PROGRAM

THE ADMINISTRATOR

STANDARD 8

The administrator regards reading as an intrinsic part of the total curriculum and supports the teaching staff in planning activities, objectives, and practices of the reading program.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
The administrator of an excellent reading program:	
a. Is responsible for the articulation and coordination of the reading program;	1 2 3 4 5
b. Guides the faculty in making decisions regarding reading program goals;	1 2 3 4 5
c. Nurtures an atmosphere in which positive attitudes toward reading can develop;	1 2 3 4 5
d. Schedules sufficient instructional time to facilitate the achievement of the reading program objectives;	1 2 3 4 5
e. Promotes inservice education to foster teacher growth and understanding of the reading process;	1 2 3 4 5
f. Is involved in planning and implementing the reading program;	1 2 3 4 5
g. Keeps abreast of research, literature and current developments in reading instruction;	1 2 3 4 5
h. Makes provision for appropriate materials and equipment needed by the school staff;	1 2 3 4 5
i. Actively participates in inservice education activities provided for professional improvement of personnel within the system.	1 2 3 4 5

STAFFING A READING PROGRAM

AUXILIARY PERSONNEL

STANDARD 9

All auxiliary personnel who contribute to planning, implementing, or evaluating the reading program enhance the established goals of the program.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
Auxiliary personnel can strengthen a reading program, therefore:	
a. Paraprofessional assistance is used as needed;	1 2 3 4 5
b. A variety of professional support services are available and are used effectively;	1 2 3 4 5
c. All persons contributing to the reading program are informed of its instructional objectives;	1 2 3 4 5
d. Inservice instructors and consultants are made aware of the [illegible] and instructional objectives of the reading program;	1 2 3 4 5
e. All persons contributing to the reading program are encouraged to participate in relevant inservice activities;	1 2 3 4 5
f. The staff is informed of services available from professional specialists and of the procedures for securing the services.	1 2 3 4 5

IV. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

PRINCIPLE D

The cooperative commitment of all educational personnel and members of the community is necessary if the goal of literacy for all is to be achieved.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

STANDARD 10

Educational personnel at all levels plan and implement strategies for promoting the reading program and for enlisting community support for and involvement in the reading program.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	Degree of Excellence
Boards of Education support the reading program by:	
a. Appropriating financial resources to implement a quality program;	1 2 3 4 5
b. Providing qualified staff necessary to implement the program;	1 2 3 4 5
c. Being informed of program goals and pupil progress.	1 2 3 4 5
The superintendent and the central office staff support the reading program by:	
d. Allocating available resources both human and material;	1 2 3 4 5
e. Facilitating effective program development;	1 2 3 4 5
The principal and school staff enlist community support for the reading program by:	1 2 3 4 5
f. Providing parents of preschool and inschool learners with suggestions for everyday activities which build foundations for future reading success;	1 2 3 4 5
g. Providing the family of the adult learner with suggestions for contributing to the learner's success in reading, if requested;	1 2 3 4 5
h. Providing information about alternative reading programs to out-of-school youth and adults;	1 2 3 4 5
i. Disseminating current information about the reading program to the community;	1 2 3 4 5
j. Building effective relations between the home, the school, and the community;	1 2 3 4 5
k. Informing parents and students of the purposes of the reading program and of how reading skills are acquired;	1 2 3 4 5
l. Making use of cultural and educational resources, including institutions of higher education and other public and private, profit and non-profit agencies.	1 2 3 4 5
Members of the community evidence support of the reading program by:	
m. Becoming involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation;	1 2 3 4 5
n. Contributing leadership, volunteer services, and resources according to local needs;	1 2 3 4 5
o. Creating a community environment that recognizes the importance of reading;	1 2 3 4 5
p. Visiting the schools to observe the program and to determine additional assistance that can be rendered.	1 2 3 4 5